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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 160th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 28 September 1994, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BADRAN

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Honduras (continued) (CRC/C/3/Add.17; CRC/C.6/WP.2)

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Honduran delegation to respond to questions 27 to 35 on the list of issues (CRC/C.6/WP.2), which read:

"Basic health and welfare

(Arts. 6, para. 2, 23, 24, 26 and 18, para. 3, and 27, paras. 1-3, of the Convention)

27. Please provide information on measures taken to guarantee poor children adequate access to health care. Please comment on the balance between curative and preventive health programmes.

28. What efforts are made under the primary health care programme and PNI to reduce malnutrition? Is there any supplementary feeding programme for children?

29. What plans have been developed to combat HIV-virus and AIDS?

30. Please provide information on the situation of disabled children, including access to education, training, health care services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities.

31. Please provide information on the social security system and how children can benefit from it.

Education, leisure and cultural activities

(Arts. 28, 29 and 31 of the Convention)

32. What is being done to improve school attendance in remote areas? What are the concrete measures to prevent children from dropping out of school, engaging in work, and what are their results?

33. What is the real cost for the family of having a child in school at the different levels? What is done to allow for children from poor families to continue their education?

34. What measures are taken to improve the quality of education and teaching? What plans are there to ensure a sufficient number of teachers in the school system, to enhance their competence, and to ensure adequate educational facilities? How many teacher training institutions are there and how many persons graduate from these institutions each year?

35. Please indicate whether children belonging to indigenous peoples may be taught in their own language."

2. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras), replying to question 27, said that the Honduran network of medical services, which included rural health centres, area hospital centres, and health centres with doctors, had to cope not only with infectious diseases, but with a new group of problems, among them cancer, cardiovascular and metabolic illnesses, and those related to the consumption of tobacco, alcohol and narcotic drugs. The health care policy of the Ministry of Health stressed primary care and community participation, and, while it was based not on the Convention on the Rights of the Child so much as on the health profile of the population, they were in many ways similar, giving priority to childbirth and child-rearing, from the prenatal stage onwards. The broad aim of Honduran health policy was to bring essential services to all areas of the country, however remote, and to strengthen community services and community participation, in particular by providing training to teachers, community volunteers, and midwives. Programmes included growth and development monitoring, prevention and treatment of diarrhoeal illness, and the treatment of acute respiratory disease, which affected great numbers of children. The expanded immunization programme, administered by government agencies in collaboration with private institutions, had achieved 100 per cent coverage in just a few years, and the incidence of disease had generally diminished. No cases of diphtheria had been registered in over 10 years, and measles which occurred in epidemic cycles of seven years, was under control. The incidence of neonatal tetanus had also been reduced. Massive community education programmes in the area of health had been conducted. Health care was available in schools for children and adolescents, and basic medical and health-care information had been assembled and distributed to teachers throughout the country.

3. Maternal care programmes were aimed at improving life expectancy through simple health care techniques. Such programmes also involved constructing new hospital units for the care of mothers and children, refurbishing neglected medical centres, standardizing medical records and training community participants. The Family Planning Association provided, through its six regional centres, educational programmes on reproduction to more than 1 million people.

4. Honduran health policy aimed to guarantee a basic level of nutrition to the entire population, and in particular to the 55 per cent that was underfed. Among related programmes were the breast-feeding programme and the campaign to combat iodine deficiency. The Patronato Nacional de la Infancia provided funds for the installation of lunch rooms and for the purchase of food. A food-stamp programme was specially designed to serve the needs of women and children, and the World Food Programme distributed food widely through various organizations.

5. In reply to question 30, she said that in Honduras both government and private institutions were working on the question of disability; that process was still at an incipient stage. It was a sensitive subject, since less than 2 per cent of the disabled population was currently receiving care. Many new and expensive programmes would be required and although some programmes had been successfully launched, they were still few and far between. In 1990, an effort had, however, begun to integrate disabled children into the regular education system.

6. On question 32, she said that the Ministry of Education had developed a programme to install radios in schools for the purpose of increasing both enrolment and attendance. It provided school vouchers to mothers to assist them in sending their children to school and administered a programme to furnish such school supplies as notebooks and pencils to schoolchildren. Efforts were under way to improve the school environment; the Social Investment Fund had significantly contributed to that effort by building new schools and school gardens, improving existing schools, and providing educational materials, equipment and food.

7. Turning to question 33, she said that the real cost for a Honduran family of maintaining a child in school amounted to less than $10 a month; much of that cost was paid through some of the compensation methods mentioned earlier. In 1992, the State had provided 3,000 scholarships for students; in 1993, that figure had risen to 4,000.

8. In reply to question 34, she said that the Ministry of Education focused its work on training teachers, increasing teachers' salaries, producing textbooks, and constructing and expanding school buildings. A plan was under way to restructure the Department of Education by 1998, for the express purpose of establishing effective systems for improving student performance.

9. On question 35, she said that the Department of Public Education had developed a national plan for public development for 1994 and 1995, which envisaged creating, inter alia, a bilingual and intercultural programme which would provide education to groups of indigenous children in their own languages.

10. The CHAIRPERSON invited members to put questions to the Honduran delegation.

11. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI said that he was concerned at the alarming rate of malnutrition in Honduras, which included 57 per cent of children under the age of five. It would be useful to know the legal minimum wage in Honduras, as well as the cost of running a household. It would be also useful to know the impact on rural sectors of such emergencies as drought and flood, which increased problems associated with poverty. Considering the number of doctors available to the population, he wondered how adequate health care could indeed be provided in rural areas to mothers, who required considerable attention in the prenatal stage and at the birth of a child. Statistics on infant mortality showed that while 60 infants died per 1,000 births in the countryside, only 40 died per 1,000 in urban areas.

12. Ten per cent of adolescent girls were mothers; that distressingly high figure led him to question the efficacy of family planning programmes in Honduras. Lastly, he would like to know if the sterilization plan respected the principle of freedom of choice for women; in many parts of the world, sterilization constituted an assault on women and an infringement of their rights.

13. With regard to education, the illiteracy rate (25 per cent) was alarmingly high and prompted questions about the high dropout rate in rural areas. Had the plan for regionalization of education in fact been launched?

Finally, it was important to note that educational curricula aimed toward university education, which were useful only for the 7 per cent of the school population that would attend university, frustrated the majority of young people and failed to prepare them for viable careers. It was important to ask whether the school system in Honduras produced the professionals that the country needed.

14. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that while there had been a flurry of activity in the area of family planning, contraceptive methods were in fact infrequently used. Access to health care remained a major problem; one third of the population had no access to health care, and that included one third of the children of the country. The shortage of clean drinking water and sanitation services also gravely affected children. He applauded Honduras for achieving 100 per cent immunization coverage, which would prove excellent for the future of the country.

15. The World Bank had recently issued a report on the world health situation; there was a growing trend in the international financial community and among donor countries towards placing more emphasis on health care support. Did the Honduran delegation have any proposals to offer to international corporations with regard to health programmes for children? It would be useful to have more details on programmes for the provision of food to children in schools, as well as on any problems that might have arisen in their implementation.

16. Figures produced by UNESCO showed that the enrolment of girls in the first grade had increased; the dropout rate was still, however, excessively high. The fact that only 38 per cent of girls reached the fifth grade would have adverse consequences on their child-rearing abilities. It would be useful to consider what measures might be taken to keep students in school. Providing scholarships was a favourable step, but would not be sufficient.

17. Miss MASON suggested that the Honduran delegation should provide figures on HIV and AIDS and should describe existing programmes designed to assist persons suffering from those illnesses, especially in rural areas. It should also provide information on the Honduran social security system. In general, insufficient statistical data had been provided by which to measure the success of health and nutrition programmes in Honduras. It would be interesting to know by what standard the success of such programmes was measured, especially urban areas. And it would be useful to know what progress had been made both in providing clean drinking water and sanitation services to rural populations and in sensitizing the population to problems associated with poor sanitation. Information on breast-feeding centres would also be helpful. Finally, the report of Honduras had stated that parents incapable of caring for their children should enjoy preference in the filling of public offices; she would appreciate clarification on that point.

18. Mrs. EUFEMIO said that the Honduran delegation had emphasized community participation in health programmes, especially those involving primary care but had also noted that limited resources were available for training. How could community members participate if no resources were available for training volunteers? Since food stamps were available to only a portion of the population suffering from poverty, it would be useful to know how the

remainder coped without that kind of support. What was the amount of the family allowance per family, and was that adequate to meet the needs of the family concerning not only food but other considerable expenses entailed by school attendance such as transport? It was important to bear in mind that school hours in rural areas should be reconciled with the need of rural families for their children to assist with farm work. Lastly, information on programmes for the community rehabilitation of disabled children would be useful.

19. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI asked whether education was free and compulsory in Honduras and, if so, up to what grade. He understood that grants could be made to parents and guardians incapable of providing for the education of minors. Did that mean that access to education could be impeded for economic reasons?

20. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras), replying to members' questions, said that between 1980 and 1992 average annual outlay by the State on health and education had amounted to 73 million and 131 million lempiras respectively, those sectors receiving the major share of social expenditure.

21. Figures for 1992 indicated that more than 60 per cent of the population were living below the poverty line, i.e. unable to meet more than 50 per cent of their essential needs. That highly disturbing state of affairs had been exacerbated by the effects of structural adjustment programmes. "Social compensation", including the distribution of subsidies, grants and vouchers, together with special programmes of maternal and infant care and aid in kind from bodies such as the World Food Programme, were far from adequate remedies, especially in urban areas, where the cost of living was higher. In the past, the delivery of assistance and relief activities, including food aid, had been principally concentrated on the workplace, notably in the densely populated cities; now, however, attempts were being made to decentralize distribution on the basis of national "poverty maps", showing where the needs were greatest, and indicators provided by fieldworkers. Such reallocation of scarce resources was not without political risks as people in the cities saw their rations reduced, but it was considered necessary in order to deal with nationwide realities more effectively and equitably.

22. The supply of foodstuffs was one thing; it was also important to give families, especially those living in the hinterland, encouragement and instruction in providing for themselves. To that end, the cultivation of small-scale family, school and community gardens and vegetable plots was being actively promoted.

23. Concerning medical care, official figures showed that 50 per cent of the country's entire resources in that sector were absorbed by Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula alone. Obviously, that imbalance must be corrected in favour of the disadvantaged rural areas as part of the social modernization programme. Together with the State health-care services, the private sector had an important role to play in improving the situation.

24. On the important but sensitive issue of family planning, progress in Honduras was being met with considerable resistance on the part of the Catholic Church, which wielded especially powerful influence in rural areas.

Sterilization could certainly not be imposed; the figures mentioned in that connection earlier in the discussion probably reflected contingency planning rather than actual cases. It should also be noted that considerable resources were devoted to the preservation of life, mothers and adolescent girls being provided with appropriate instruction, and teenage pregnancies being carefully monitored.

25. On the subject of education, she said one reason why a higher percentage of children were not progressing to the secondary level was the lack of access to suitable vocational and technical training establishments; three quarters of the existing establishments were located in urban areas. Consultations were under way with the Inter-American Development Bank with a view to opening up new prospects for training and entry into the national labour force. The private sector had also been asked to consider how the present concentration of opportunities in the northern industrial part of the country might be replaced by a broader and, ideally, nationwide network in which the particular requirements and special circumstances of women would be taken into account. There was no doubt as to the demand for more vocational and technical training centres; the Church could be instrumental in meeting that demand, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas.

26. In reply to questions concerning HIV/AIDS, she said that 5,503 affected persons had been identified in Honduras, of whom 1,144 were asymptomatic carriers and 688 were beginning to feel the effects of the virus. HIV/AIDS was an enormous, medical, ethical and moral issue: in addition to education, prevention and medical intervention, it was necessary to make proper provision for the care of victims at the terminal stage. A number of children orphaned by AIDS had been identified; it appeared that some 160 children below the age of 14 were currently affected by the virus.

27. In reply to questions on social security, she said that the only official system of social security in Honduras was directed solely at the formal labour sector, in which the employer-worker relationship existed. There, its provisions extended to the children of workers. The situation was far less clear in the informal sector, although studies were under way and the social security issue would be addressed in the new Minors Code. As to whether social security and child-care services actually reached the poorer sections of the population, she referred to the "poverty maps" and indicators which she had mentioned earlier as sources of information and as the basis for identifying those parts of the country where the provision of food and other forms of aid, as well as social investment, should be considered as matters of priority. Currently, the nine poorest departments of Honduras were being documented and targeted.

28. One particular area of priority was the provision of clean water and proper sanitation. It was hoped that those facilities would be extended to 20 per cent of the population by 1995, a year which - it was hoped - would see significant improvement of access for children to facilities of all kinds relating to their health and general development.

29. In a country where the basic minimum wage, to the extent that it could be determined, was very low and where child labour was in particular demand in rural areas during sowing and harvest time, any attempt at educational reform

must take account of the major events of the agricultural year. Efforts had been made during the past eight years to arrange school curricula in such a way that children would be free when required for work on the farm.

30. Mrs. QUIROZ CORDERO (Honduras) noted members' queries about the statement in the report that the State was to offer special protection to minors whose parents or guardians were economically incapable of providing for their upbringing and education, and that such parents and guardians were to enjoy preference in the filling of public offices. In theory, the latter provision applied to families with, six or more children, but in practice it was not implemented.

31. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) observed that annexes to the submission which had been prepared in response to the list, containing informative statistics and figures, would be made available to members of the Committee.

32. Mrs. EUFEMIO reiterated her earlier questions about possible community care of disabled children and the training and motivation of volunteer primary health care workers.

33. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) said that a large number of institutions were working to promote the full rehabilitation of disabled children so as to enable them to re-enter society and exercise their rights. In that area, the imbalance between urban and rural facilities meant that increasing attention must be paid to the latter; with community-based care as the overall objective, parents and teachers were being trained to identify different disabilities and to replace by informed understanding the traditional view that a disabled child could only become a marginalized adult. Given the number of children thus afflicted, the limited number of projects under way and the constraints on resources, the undertaking was an enormous one. But it was hoped that all children with speech, sight and hearing problems and other disabilities would eventually be able to complete their schooling instead of being discarded as useless.

34. The limited public funds available for primary health care, were being used to train volunteer workers for preventive rather than curative action; stress was also laid on enabling them to detect outbreaks of malaria and other epidemics at their very outset and to participate in vector control. Basic training of a similar type was given to midwives so that they could help to raise general levels of maternal and child health and reduce risks during pregnancy, at the perinatal stage and at the time of birth. National coverage was the goal, but the obstacles were not merely financial; basic infrastructures were inadequate and there were often transport and communication difficulties. Some international organizations active in the field were planning to motivate volunteer participation in primary health care activities by offering food in exchange for work. One important matter was that to ensure that in their communities primary health care workers enjoyed the leadership status to which they were entitled by their training.

35. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Honduran delegation to respond to questions 36 to 41 on the list of issues (CRC/C.6/WP.2), which read:

"Special protection measures

(a) Children in situations of emergency

(Arts. 22, 38 and 39 of the Convention)

36. What concrete measures are taken to stop recruitment by force of children under the age of 18 years to the armed forces?

37. What measures are taken to ensure that the rights of refugee children will be protected in future, in particular in regard to registration of birth, care for unaccompanied children and the right to attend school.

(b) Administration of juvenile justice

(Arts. 40, 37 and 39 of the Convention)

38. Please provide detailed information on the system of administration of juvenile justice and on the situation of children in conflict with the law and, in particular, on the following questions:

- What steps have been taken towards the adoption of the Minors Code, mentioned in paragraph 189 of the report, and what areas are at present considered not yet to be fully in conformity with the Convention;

- In the light of paragraph 192 of the report, in what way are the safeguards recognized by article 40 of the Convention fully respected in the cases where children are submitted to the Special Law of Minors?

- The 'various dispositions of the kind mentioned' in article 40, paragraphs 3 (b) and 4, of the Convention existing in Honduras and in what way the 'economic circumstances of the country' prevent their full implementation;

- The notion of children in 'irregular behaviour' reflected in the report (inter alia, in paras. 100 and 105), the measures envisaged to ensure their effective protection; in what way the safeguards provided in the Convention, namely in articles 37 and 40, are fully implemented, and the way in which article 25 of the Convention is taken into consideration;

- The prohibition of unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of liberty;

- Arrest, detention or imprisonment as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time;

- In what way are the penalties provided for in paragraphs 198 and 199 of the report applicable to children and in what way are they considered to be compatible with article 40, paragraph 1, of the Convention (see also para. 183 of the report).

39. Please provide also further information on the treatment of young law offenders and, in particular, on the following questions:

- What types of institutions exist for the custody of young law offenders and what specific official rules are there for their treatment?

- How are the conditions in such institutions monitored?

- Are there complaint procedures in cases of ill-treatment before independent bodies?

- What education and health facilities are there in these institutions?

- What measures are taken for the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of children in conflict with the law (art. 39)?

- Have personnel in these institutions received training about the provisions of the Convention and about international rules concerning the treatment of young offenders?

(c) Children in situations of exploitation

(Arts. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 39 of the Convention)

40. Are there plans to amend the Labour Code in line with ILO Convention No. 138 so that it would protect minors in work also outside formal employment, including in domestic work? Are steps prepared to bridge the gap between the Code and ILO Convention No. 138 regarding prohibition of unhealthy and dangerous jobs below 18 years of age? What measures are taken to ensure that working children below 14 years are not exploited and are treated according to international standards?

41. Please provide information on the existence of, and concrete measures to combat, the exploitation of children including:

- The sale and use of drugs;

- Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including prostitution;

- Other forms of exploitation;

- Sale, trafficking and abduction of children."

36. Mrs. QUIROZ CORDERO (Honduras), referring to question 36, said that, in accordance with article 276 of the Constitution, minors under the age of 18 could not be recruited into the army, and military service could not exceed 24 months for nationals between the ages of 18 and 30 years. Under Decree No. 24-94, military service had become voluntary in time of peace.

37. Turning to question 37, she referred to draft legislation concerning treatment of, and assistance to, refugees which guaranteed the latter's fundamental rights in accordance with the Honduran Constitution. The same draft legislation referred to the right of refugee children to have a basic education on an equal footing with Honduran children. Draft legislation was also being prepared concerning follow-up to the situation of persons who had been refugees in Honduras. The Ministry of Education had acted in coordination with UNHCR in organizing schools in refugee camps.

38. Concerning question 38, two juvenile court judges had been appointed by the Supreme Court. Their activities were carried out in conjunction with the National Social Welfare Board. As yet there was no specific guardianship body in Honduras; in effect the police performed that role. When minors were detained, and once their status as minors had been ascertained, they came under the special jurisdiction for juveniles. In juvenile courts, account was taken of the situation of defendants and, as appropriate, social or psychological studies were undertaken by staff from observation centres under the responsibility of the National Social Welfare Board. Programmes in support of minors in conflict with the law were carried out at governmental level by members of the same Board. However, given their very modest budgetary allocation, such centres were still inadequately equipped.

39. In connection with question 39, she said that provision was made for special institutions for minors under the responsibility of the National Social Welfare Board. There were two custodial centres (for male and female juveniles respectively) and two rehabilitation centres (Jalteba and El Carmen) for minors between the ages of 12 and 18 years, where they received education up to the beginning of secondary level and training in workshops. Unfortunately, the centres were in a poor state of upkeep and there was a shortage of equipment, trained personnel and funding. Such institutions were supervised by the National Social Welfare Board to ensure standards of hygiene, care, education and training, including sports, religious and artistic activities, health care, a balanced and appropriate diet, social and educational assessment, and appropriate rehabilitation. Talks were given to raise the awareness of staff employed at the centres and efforts were made to ensure that the minors' interests were taken into consideration and their needs met. Accelerated primary education was provided in the centres, while secondary education took place at local schools. While no specific training concerning the treatment of young offenders had been given, seminars and workshops were being planned with the collaboration of the national Human Rights Commission and UNICEF.

40. The administration of juvenile justice comprised various elements: the police, juvenile courts, State centres and non-governmental services. Concerning the police, the draft Minors Code contained provisions concerning the arrest of minors and the need to take their well-being into consideration. Torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment was absolutely prohibited, as was physical or psychological pressure to make a minor confess or provide information. Juvenile courts had the power to determine cases in which minors were to be considered as being in an irregular situation. While such courts could exercise a certain degree of discretion in determining measures to be taken, that should not be assumed to imply arbitrary power, as minimum and maximum limits were laid down. However, the courts were faced with the problem of scarce resources, which restricted the options available to them and made follow-up difficult. Alternatives available to the courts were in many cases confined to: immediate release, placement in open centres, from which it was easy to abscond, or deprivation of liberty, which might extend for considerable periods. State centres for the care of minors included centres for custody, and observation/rehabilitation centres. Non-governmental services were also available, the organizations concerned frequently coordinating their activities with those of the juvenile courts.

41. Lastly, turning to questions 40 and 41, she said that the Labour Code governed the conditions of employment for minors and aimed to protect them from exploitation.

42. The CHAIRPERSON, referring to paragraphs 206 to 208 of the Honduran report, asked whether the legislation prohibiting sexual exploitation and abuse was sufficient. In that context she pointed out that, according to paragraph 208 (b), the rape of a virgin between 12 and 21 years of age appeared to carry a penalty of only 2 to 3 years' imprisonment.

43. Mrs. EUFEMIO asked whether, in the case of unaccompanied refugee children, efforts were made to trace the parents or, where that was not possible, to provide such children with an acceptable substitute family, for example through adoption.

44. Mr. HAMMARBERG observed that the question of refugees was no longer a major concern at the current time, given the decrease in the refugee community but it might be useful for the future to give consideration, in consultation, with UNHCR, to the question of registration of births among the refugee community in order to avoid statelessness and to the adoption of procedures for unaccompanied minors. Concerning enforced recruitment to the armed forces, he requested confirmation that there would in the future be no such risk for young men, especially in rural areas, as there had been in the past.

45. On the question of juvenile justice, he requested confirmation that problems relating to the treatment of young persons by law enforcement personnel had been solved, that there were real opportunities for such persons to make complaints and that there was no impunity in practice for law enforcement personnel in the event of questionable conduct on their part. Concerning enforced or involuntary disappearances, in view of reports that not all such cases had been fully clarified, he asked whether there were in fact any outstanding cases and, if so, what measures were being taken to clarify them, in particular where they involved parent-child relationships. On the

question of child labour and in the context of ILO Convention No. 138, he noted that the Labour Code provided protection to minors in the case of formal employment only; clarification concerning the informal sector would be appreciated, as would further explanations concerning the protection of children in the 16 to 18 year age group from unhealthy or dangerous employment.

46. Miss MASON requested further information concerning procedures upon arrest, particularly in cases where an offence committed by a minor would be considered a serious offence if committed by an adult. To what extent were the parents of such minors involved and what was the procedure for the minor between his arrest and being brought before a court. Noting that there appeared to be few institutions for minors in conflict with the law and that they seemed to be the same as those to which children having problems with family placement were sent, she requested further information. She also requested confirmation that the period permitted by law between arrest and appearance in court was as much as 25 days, as seemed to be the case according to paragraphs 104 and 105 of the initial report. Where were children who had infringed criminal legislation kept in cases where there were no local holding facilities?

47. On the question of children and economic exploitation, were statistics available for girls employed as domestic servants? Also on the question of employment, where children were employed because their family circumstances so demanded, did they have social security protection in the event of unemployment? How were measures to prevent minors from being employed in clubs, etc. enforced? What was the extent of the problem of street children and what programmes for family reunification had been introduced in that context? Concerning narcotics and alcohol abuse, were statistics available concerning the extent of the problem and programmes, and was information available on the extent of the problem of child prostitution? Did legislation against child pornography exist? Was sex education provided in schools? To what extent did customs or tradition encourage sexual exploitation? Lastly, she would welcome further information concerning children belonging to minorities and the schools they attended; did they live in separate communities and to what extent were minority groups integrated into Honduran society?

48. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI, referring to refugee communities in particular, asked whether there was any mechanism for monitoring the situation of children, particularly with regard to child prostitution. He also requested information concerning children who were sent out to work by their parents to earn money for them. Was any information available about possible mistreatment in that context? Information concerning any efforts to educate parents and to discourage them from beating or maltreating their children would be appreciated. Lastly, concerning the right to work, he asked whether teenage girls in employment were allowed to form or become members of trade unions.

49. Mrs. EUFEMIO, noting that the use of minors for begging was prohibited, asked how that activity was prevented, how child beggars were treated and what measures were taken in relation to adults who promoted begging, especially if they were the parents of the children concerned. In connection with the

employment of children who had to support their parents, she asked what measures were being taken to assist parents to find a livelihood which would enable them to support their families.

50. The CHAIRPERSON said that in view of the shortage of time, she would ask the Honduran delegation to pick out for immediate response two or three of the many questions that had been asked. Information on the rest could be sent to the secretariat for circulation to the members of the Committee.

51. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) said that the problem of street children was receiving serious attention. The Social Welfare Board was preparing a new programme and a special centre would be opened in October to work with street children and provide them with basic services. There would be no coercion. It was hoped to encourage the children to enter the centre voluntarily and a publicity campaign was being waged to that end. Traditionally, the centres run by the Social Welfare Board were for custodial and re-educational purposes and children were sent there by the juvenile courts. The new centre was to have a different approach that would encourage the street children to accept the special treatment offered.

52. Mrs. QUIROZ CORDERO (Honduras) said that military service had been compulsory in Honduras but was now voluntary. It was not the case that minors could be detained by the police for 25 days; the police could only hold children charged with an offence for 24 hours. The period of 25 days was for observation in a custodial establishment operated by the Social Welfare Board. Workers under the age of 18 had the same rights as adults, including the right to join trade unions. Penalties for sexual abuse were very low but under the planned reform of the Criminal Code they were to be increased. A women's association was campaigning for higher penalties. A draft law on domestic violence was currently before Congress. Refugees who were registered had the same rights and obligations as Honduran citizens. Refugee children were not taken from their families; if they had no family however, they were given care and attempts made to find foster families for them. They were not candidates for adoption, which in Honduras was only possible by consent. In the case of enforced disappearances, efforts were made to find and punish those responsible and the mothers and children of such persons were given compensation.

53. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) said that the Central American Parliament was currently discussing legislation on child workers. The precise content was not yet known, but it would include protective measures, skills training and penalties for infringement of its provisions.

54. The CHAIRPERSON invited members to make their concluding remarks.

55. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that in the economic field Honduras needed to develop a strategy of investing in health and education. The donor community should be informed that more emphasis on those sectors was necessary in the light of the problems experienced, and the international organizations, including the World Bank, should be recommended to be more generous in that connection. The Honduran Government should also consider holding a meeting, to which UNICEF in particular would be invited, together with the World Bank and interested NGOs, to discuss its problems in implementing the Convention. There was also a need

for continuous monitoring of developments. The National Commission on the Rights of the Child should be given official status and made a permanent body, and should include representatives of the NGO community and of the children themselves. The possibility should be considered of holding an annual meeting of the Commission, followed by a report to Parliament. It was also necessary to develop a strategy for teaching the letter and spirit of the Convention in schools. The legal reforms already under way were welcome, but further emphasis was needed on measures to implement the Convention and to rectify abuses. More juvenile courts should be established and a definitive version of the Minors Code should be adopted. There should be outside monitoring of places of detention. The Government itself should monitor the work of the private social welfare institutions. The Labour Code should be reviewed for apparent inconsistencies with ILO Convention No. 138, and the Government should consider ratifying ILO Convention No. 169, concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries, which also concerned children.

56. Mrs. EUFEMIO said that it was important to establish social indicators as a means of monitoring implementation of the Convention. Statistical services should be made more efficient at the national and municipal levels. She stressed that the contribution of volunteers could help to solve the problem of shortage of funds and that their work should be recognized as an important aspect of programme delivery. Honduras already possessed some good legislation but it needed to be supplemented by specific programmes. It was important for such programmes to focus on developing the rights of the child and there should be arrangements for testing the outcome in order to prove their effectiveness.

57. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI congratulated the Honduran delegation on the many advances that had been made in a short space of time. While State cooperation with NGOs was fundamental, it needed to be more carefully structured. The difficulty of disseminating the Convention was a cause for concern, as was the status of ethnic minorities in Honduras. There was also the problem of the large group of people without papers and thus with no civil existence. Such a situation inevitably led to abuse and it was essential for the registration of the population to be brought up to date. Efforts must be made to extend social services to all the people. Juvenile courts should be set up in all the departments, not just in the two major cities. Regarding health services for children, efforts should be made to modernize obsolete equipment, make medicines available and institute a school meals programme. Violations of the rights of the child, particularly by the authorities, should be severely punished. The minimum age of criminal responsibility should be raised from 12 years. The Ministry of Labour should provide genuine protection for child workers, especially girls.

58. He noted that economic restructuring measures had caused problems in many Latin American countries. The children's best interests should be the primary consideration at all times. Economic reforms achieved at great social cost often had very grave consequences for the poorest members of society, most of whom were children. He urged the Government to seek the fullest international cooperation in the task of implementing and monitoring the Convention.

59. Miss MASON expressed appreciation for the information provided by the Honduran delegation. The Committee was very fortunate in being one of the few human rights bodies to which the Honduran Government had reported, thus showing its commitment to the welfare of children. The shortcomings in Honduras came not from lack of will on the part of the Government, but from the absence of financial and human resources. The social sector was usually the first to suffer in times of economic retrenchment and the Committee was satisfied that the Government was doing its best on that score.

60. The Government had a special responsibility to disseminate information on the Convention; awareness of children's rights must be made universal. Legislation was a first step but it needed to be reinforced by administrative measures. The juvenile justice system needed much attention. She still thought that 25 days was a very long time to keep a possible juvenile offender under observation. Local attitudes to sexual matters also needed attention. Legislation could not help without a determined effort to educate parents and others. More personnel were obviously needed to administer the system of juvenile justice; two juvenile courts were clearly not enough for the whole country. She had suggested earlier that the appointment of a children's Ombudsman might be useful. She re-emphasized the importance of making a special effort to extend programmes to the rural areas. Innovations always started in the towns and took time to reach the countryside. The primary health care system needed to reach out further. Extending the system of registration was also important. In conclusion, she wished the children of Honduras well: there were obviously many able persons acting on their behalf.

61. Mr. KOLOSOV said it was his impression that Honduran society was confronting a contradictory situation. While legislation was gradually improving, at the same time the actual situation in some spheres was steadily deteriorating. He understood that the current meeting was only the beginning of the dialogue with Honduras. It would be more fruitful in five years time, when the next report was submitted. While the discussion had been frank and open, it had not been very analytical. There had been many references to difficulties and deficiencies, but few to root causes. Unless the real causes of the problems encountered were understood, it would be impossible to overcome them. The lack of finance had been heavily stressed but there were other shortcomings: lack of monitoring, lack of coordination, lack of measures to enforce some very good legislation, and lack of awareness on the part of the public. Other difficulties stemmed from national traditions and there were also, perhaps, some elements of corruption.

62. Honduras was a small country confronted with huge problems in many spheres and it was impossible for it to solve them all in a short time. However, it was his conviction that the start to a solution lay in radical reform of the school system. About 50 per cent of Honduran children and young people were of school age and the future of Honduran society would depend on what became of them. It was not improvement that the system needed but radical reform, leading to advances in sex education, literacy, nutrition, medical services and solutions to the problem of the exploitation of child workers. The Government should seriously consider a major reallocation of budgetary resources in order to support schools and train teachers. A system

of school inspections should be established and teachers' salaries should be increased so that the best candidates could be attracted. None of that could be done without allocating far more resources to the school system.

63. Lastly, the people of Honduras must be encouraged to comply with at least the four main principles of the Convention: non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child. For the time being, it could not be said that those principles were being fully observed and implemented in Honduras.

64. The CHAIRPERSON said that the dialogue had been very fruitful. Sympathy had been expressed for the difficulties and obstacles that confronted Honduras and there had been praise for the Government's political will. She hoped that the Committee members' concluding remarks would be duly considered and their suggestions implemented. In five years' time there would be a follow-up to the initial report. In the meantime she hoped the Government would seek assistance from United Nations bodies and agencies, especially UNICEF and ILO, and from the donor countries regarding the external debt problem and structural changes in the economy. She thanked the members of the Honduran delegation for their patience and wished the children of Honduras a better standard of living and well-being. She was sure that the Government would work towards that end.

65. Mrs. MEJIA (Honduras) said that her delegation's best hopes had been fulfilled in the dialogue with the Committee. Honduras now knew that it was not alone and also knew what was available in the way of help. She trusted that the relationship would continue. She regretted that there had not been time to discuss much of the information brought by her delegation, but it would be left with the secretariat, together with some statistical material.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.